

Modern Recipes for KITCHEN SUCCESS

BY KENDRA GEMMA

TRANSFORM
YOUR PLAIN
KITCHEN
INTO A
FABULOUS
SHOWPLACE
WITH THESE
NEW IDEAS

Just as a wonderful meal begins with the perfect balance and fresh ingredients, the ideal kitchen germinates from a carefully planned design and quality materials. Concocting the best recipe for your kitchen takes time and collaboration with a talented and sympathetic designer. But whether you're starting from scratch, remodeling or experimenting, let the three kitchens profiled here inspire you. >>



The concrete island serves as a partition between the kitchen and dining area. A cantilevered cutting board and open shelf complete the clean design.



Openness was important in order to brighten up this compact kitchen. The marble-topped counter can be used for serving and dining. The frosted glass in the cabinets creates more efficiency and visualization than plain wood doors.

SETTING A COURSE

When you're blessed with the ability to build a kitchen from the ground up, the sky's the limit — to an extent — as far as placement and layout go. But for Miami's brand new luxury Bridgewater condominiums, architect Kobi Karp and interior designer Michael Segal came down to earth and looked to the adjacent bay for guidance as they crafted the units' kitchens. "The vision was to create the kitchens very much like you were on a yacht," says Karp, who also holds a degree in interior design.

The entire unit envelops the maritime lifestyle. "The condominiums emphasize a fluid atmosphere, reflective of its waterfront environment," Segal says. He achieved the nautical moderne feeling in the kitchen by designing multi-purpose cabinets that resembled built-in furniture. "They're compartmentalized for various functions," Segal says. "They have areas in which cookware is stored and other places for utensils."

The lower cabinetry, manufactured by Casa Mia, has a contemporary align oak finish whose horizontal wood grain enhances the width of the small space. The upper cabinets' frosted glass is framed by aluminum and the doors lift for easy storage access. "The glass-paneled doors create more efficiency and visualization than just solid wood doors," says Segal.

Recipe

FOR SMALL KITCHENS ...

Even if your available kitchen space is smaller than a bread box, you can still create an efficient and attractive cooking and socializing area. Follow these tips from architect and interior designer Kobi Karp and you'll be well on your way to a functional and beautiful kitchen.

- >> Think out of the box.
- >> Work within the negative spaces. Make it part of the greater space, as he did in the Bridgewater project, rather than an enclosed closet.
- >> Use built-in cabinets to define the space and to increase storage.
- >> Keep it light, airy and open.

Openness was important in order to brighten the compact kitchen and capitalize on the condo's waterfront location, capturing the yacht feel. "The kitchen was designed as an integral part of the living and dining room," Karp says. "We had a great opportunity to open the kitchen to take advantage of the direct view."

The design team carefully plotted out each location for maximum exposure. "Every counter faces a sun-filled room and some kitchens have windows in them," Segal says. "The kitchen was built to feel very open and transparent." This layout also allowed for more socializing and easier access to the rest of the condo.

Segal incorporated a marble return to increase the working counter space, as well as the entertaining possibilities. A two-tiered, raised-height counter can be used for serving and for casual dining. "I liked the ability to utilize the kitchen and to look out to the living room area so that you can still converse with guests," Segal says.

The key to smooth sailing when charting your new kitchen project is to set off with a thoughtful map. "Basically, the units were so well-designed [by Karp] that there was no real challenge" when it came to outfitting the space, Segal says. >>

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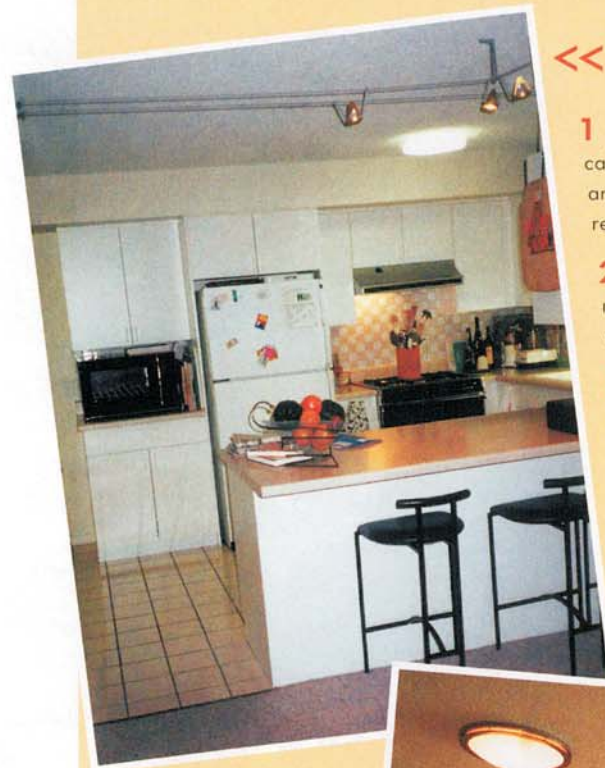
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RENOVATION SUCCESS STORY



<< *Before*

- 1 The plain, white cabinets were outdated and needed to be replaced.
- 2 The older and mismatched appliances dated the entire space.
- 3 Both cooks, there was not enough counter space for the homeowners.
- 4 Fluorescent lights needed to be jazzed up to work with the new halogen fixtures.

After >>

- 1 Sleek new cabinets give the room a more contemporary feel.
- 2 Matching stainless appliances pull the look together.
- 3 A rounded countertop gives more prep space for cooking.
- 4 The existing round light fixture was updated with a metal fitting that blends in better with the halogen lights over the peninsula.



TWEAKED RECIPE

Redoing a kitchen always poses a challenge, especially in the prescribed space of a condominium. It requires ingenuity, compromise and time to whip up a modern kitchen with a long shelf life. Certified Kitchen Designer (CKD) Dave Karlson of Karlson Kitchens in Evanston, Ill., came up with just the right recipe for a recent condominium kitchen makeover with help from its artistic and contemporary owners.

"The general shape didn't change much," Karlson says. Due to a condo's limitations, "you don't have as much freedom to move mechanical systems around." In one case, the restrictions sparked an inspired solution. Because the concrete ceiling made electrical relocation nearly impossible, Karlson devised an alternative to traditional fixtures. "Halogen lights hung by wire from the ceiling met both the contemporary and mechanical needs," he says.

The homeowners' modern mindset influenced the clean, streamlined design of the cabinetry as well. Karlson chose Studio Becker's Forum cabinets, slab doors of high-pressure laminate in a natural maple finish, and kept the look sleek with horizontal pulls that run along the full width of the bottom. "We use them in contemporary settings so that the door looks handleless," he says.

In redesigning the kitchen, Karlson softened its formerly harsh and dated appearance by rounding the once square peninsula. "The curves made it look better and function better," he says. "It added a contemporary feel and shape to the kitchen." The homeowners, both cooks, now have more counter space on which to prepare their meals. A lacquered gray rounded cabinet mirrors the curved peninsula. It also provides ambient lighting thanks to embedded lights that shine through the edges of the glass shelving. "At nighttime, it gives off a luminescent glow," Karlson says.



After

Additional inventive illumination comes from beneath the other cabinets. He used recessed under-cabinet lighting, which has no baffles or visible wires, imparting a very clean look. For uniformity, Karlson used matching granite floors and countertops and complemented the stainless steel appliances with less-expensive matte finish aluminum backsplashes.

While the construction itself took 10 weeks, the whole process had a longer

prep time. "We begin with the design of a space," he says. "There's a lot more to redoing a kitchen than the appliances. There's an emotion and a personality."

To ensure that your style comes through in the end product, he advocates working closely with your designer like the homeowners did on this kitchen remodel. "Find a designer who represents your ideas and get involved," Karlson says. "Be willing to invest the time."

Above: Matching granite floors and countertops create stylish uniformity in the new kitchen design.

If you treat your collaboration as a relationship, it will lead to a kitchen design that reflects your personal tastes and needs. "Kitchens have a lifetime of 20 to 30 years," he says. "[So] find the right people, use the right products and take the time." >>



MIX IT UP

Convention dictates that kitchen surfaces be limited to wood, stone and laminate. Designer Fu-Tung Cheng has made it his mission to pour concrete into that mix, fashioning everything from countertops to walls to floors out of the material. "It has come to the forefront as a viable material because, over the years, several fabricators have developed concrete as a new media of expression," Cheng says.

His firm, Cheng Design, is one such fabricator. It sells two products, Geocrete and Neomix, to facilitate the use of concrete inside the house and conducts on-site training for both do-it-yourselfers and professionals. Cheng's latest book, *Concrete at Home*, also explores the possibilities of the material and offers step-by-step instruction.

Before you think you can simply mix up a batch of concrete and spread it into a nifty new countertop, Cheng advises methodical analysis. "You have to be aware of the ergonomics of kitchens," he says. "My driving message is how important thoughtful design is. Design is the software of craftsmanship."

Once you realize concrete's potential, the variations seem endless. "You can color it, shape it, polish it to a mirror finish, grind it so the aggregates show," he enumerates. "You can use semiprecious stones or glass and embed

Concrete has come to the forefront in kitchen design. It can be colored, shaped or polished to a mirror finish.

everyday to haute couture. Although he never uses wall-to-wall concrete, he is building an island home almost entirely of the material. The masterpiece is a 160-foot curved retaining wall that reaches 15 feet high and can withstand 200 mph hurricane-force winds.

To those who are still wary about using a porous, stain-prone substance in their kitchen, Cheng suggests reconsidering the other products you treasure. "Wood is not practical for a kitchen floor, but people love it for its warmth and softness," he says. "It's the same thing with concrete. It has its own integrity and mass appeal."

Cheng admits that concrete is susceptible to staining, "but for customization and a new look, it's very desirable." As for cleaning, Cheng says the process is not as difficult as some believe. "Those stains are removed quite easily," he explains. "It's a refinishable material," he says. A high-grit diamond pad will buff out any blemish. Then, simply wipe it down, reseal and re wax and it's as good as new.

Concrete's expressiveness, durability and ease of care make it a great medium for kitchen accents or even larger statements. ●

it and grind it, essentially making your own marble or granite."

It all starts and ends with good design and execution. "There are no advantages [to concrete] if it doesn't go through the refinement and craftsmanship," he says. "Concrete is great because it's as ubiquitous and commonplace as wool or cotton. It's really about how you apply it whether you get a JC Penney T-shirt or an Armani suit."

Cheng strives for the latter and some of his favorite projects transcend the

Recipe

STEPPING INTO CONCRETE

If you want to experiment with concrete, Cheng recommends that you first examine your goals. If you're using it because it's fashionable, don't try it. He also says you can't achieve a sleek look with concrete, if that's what you're after. "If you want something expressive, that's a good reason [to use it]," Cheng says. "It's one of the few things left in the kitchen that you can do on your own."

In addition to training courses and two books, *Concrete Countertops* and *Concrete at Home*, Cheng Designs produces a DVD instructing viewers how to template, grind, polish and inlay.

Cheng suggests newcomers start with a bathroom vanity. "It's small and easy to do," he says. For a more sophisticated project, pour concrete monolithically to create a combination countertop and wall. Or, you can make a less obtrusive statement with a concrete partition wall or a partially structural wall to support a cantilevered table.

If you'd rather keep your hands clean and leave the dirty work to the experts, visit www.concreteexchange.com for a list of Cheng-trained, independent contractors throughout the country.

GET THE LOOK ON THE COVER

With a little bit of inspiration and a few accessories, your kitchen can look like it belongs on a magazine cover, too. Here's how:

- >> Use a pastel color to soften the room. The lavender color used here perfectly complements the cabinets and stainless appliances.
- >> Instead of using bland cabinet hardware, use whimsical pieces, like Merillat's Satin Nickel Squiggle Pulls (\$6). To see more hardware ideas, turn to page 40.
- >> Accessorize with colorful glass vases and brightly colored flowers. These additional punches of color can instantly wake up a dull kitchen.
- >> Display fruit in clear glass bowls to show off the natural color. Also try mixing lemons and limes, and different colored apples.
- >> A small plant, such as an orchid or lily brings life to a kitchen and can also serve as a centerpiece for a table or eating area.



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